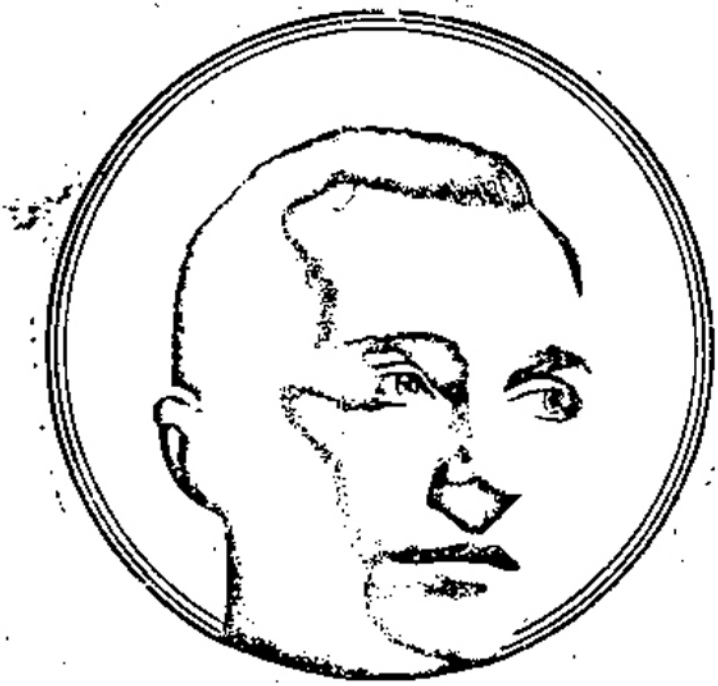

the Victorian Bing Crosby Society

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1978

Hello again,

Here we are again, after some delay with our fourth major newsletter for 1978. Sorry for the delay but the pressures of work make it difficult to turn these things out on a more regular basis.

I hope that everyone received the news about the delayed showing of King of Jazz in time. Unfortunately, the print of the film that we were expecting from the USA has been inexplicably held up. Just as soon as we have a definite date for the screening, we will let you know.

Incredibly, our society is almost one year old already! I'm sure that members who attended that initial meeting at the Caulfield Centre 12 months ago will have trouble in believing that the time has passed so rapidly. So much has happened since then.

Obviously, with the reaching of our first birthday, the question of membership renewal arises. To simplify matters, your committee has decided to rationalize all membership fees, so that no matter when you joined the society (and we have had new members joining every month since last August), all memberships will be renewable by August 31st this year. In other words, if you joined the society in, say February 1978, we would like you to remit 6 months membership fee to make you a financial member until August 31st, 1979. To simplify matters, we have enclosed a membership renewal form stating the month that you joined and the appropriate fee payable. We would appreciate you returning your remittance to us as soon as possible. If for some reason you do not wish to rejoin, could you please let us know as this will save us the trouble and expense of sending you further renewal notices.

You will be pleased to know that we have been able to obtain a much more convenient, much more comfortable venue for our future music evenings. This will be the theatrette of the Mobil Building, 2 City Road, South Melbourne. The Mobil Building is a modern office building located right on the corner of City Road and South Gate (diagonally opposite the back of the Cultural Centre) and there is ample parking all around. The theatrette has large, comfortable seats and full projection facilities should we ever decide to hold a film evening there. One of the most pleasing aspects of our new venue is that Mobil are providing it for us absolutely free of charge. In addition, also without

charge, we will be provided with coffee, tea and biscuits. The only proviso is that we vacate the premises no later than 11.00 p.m. preferably by 10.30 p.m. This will mean that we will have to start exactly at the stated time, but this is a small price to pay for the facilities offered.

We are particularly delighted at being able to find so suitable a venue for our future music evenings. We have been looking for somewhere in South Melbourne for some time as this part of the city is ideally and centrally placed for our widely spread membership. With the city being no more than 5 minutes walk away, all forms of public transport are readily accessable for those who require it.

Our first use of the Mobil theatrette will be as follows.

FUTURE FUNCTIONS

Music Evening - Monday August 28th. 7.30pm - 10.30 pm

Our 4th music evening for 1978 features not only music but FILM as well. Through the kindness of member Maria Ermacora we will be screening 8mm sound copies of two of Bing's Mack Sennett shorts from 1931: "Blue of the night" and "I surrender dear".

Speakers for the evening will be Les Saynor and Ken Orren who will both be illustrating their talks with examples of various Crosby recordings over the years. In addition, Thelma Wood will be holding another of her "interesting" Crosby Quizzes.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED. Until now, our music evenings have been presented by just a handful of members. If you can string together half-a-dozen Crosby tracks on a cassette and could think of a few words to say about each, then you're fully qualified to present a segment in a future evening. You can choose any topic: sad songs, funny songs, duets, ballads - whatever. Even your favourite Crosby records. If you think that you could fill the above, drop me a line at PO Box 422, South Melbourne.

Hopefully, if all goes well with the Mobil theatrette, we will be able to secure a permanent booking, say every second month at the same time, for our music evenings. Having a regular date to work to will perhaps allow you to schedule your social calendar to leave these dates free.

DINNER DANCE DINNER DANCE DINNER DANCE
Wednesday September 27th 7.30pm - 12.30 pm

Late September we have scheduled what we hope will be the first of what will become an annual event: The Victorian Bing Crosby Society Dinner Dance. We have chosen Wednesday September 27th because being the day before Show Day, it will allow you to sleep in next mornin. There is so much to tell you about the evening, that I think it will be easier to list it all in point form below.

. Venue: Golden Sands Reception Rooms, 399 Blackburn Road, East Burwood.

. Cost: $20 a double (members)
$28 a double (non-members)
(Single members, ½ the members rate)

This includes: Pre-dinner sherries
Hot savories
4 course dinner
AND all drinks, your choice.

Music: Two bands will be on hand all evening to supply the music for dancing and listening - Crosby songs and other music of the period.

Dress: Ladies: Formal
Men: Lounge Suit

In addition: There will be RAFFLES for:

*A magnificent ten pound fruit cake, beautifully iced in Blue, Gold and White with a Bing Crosby motif in the centre - prepared and donated by Betty Orren.

*A cassette player + three Crosby Cassettes of your choice from the Bentleigh Sewing and Record Centre - donated very generously by Le Mans Motors (The Toyota people) of Dandenong Road, Oakleigh.

* A collector's parcel of records featuring several early Crosby 78's and a couple of surprises.

Plus: Lucky spot prizes throughout the evening.

Book early, book NOW

There are just 80 double tickets available for the evening and they are selling already. Non-members are welcome to make up the numbers once members are catered for but if we don't hear from you within the next week or two, we will assume that you are not interested. You are welcome to bring along friends and relatives, but please please please, book NOW and avoid disappointment.

How to book

Ring or write to the President of our social committee, Thelma Wood.
Phone: 959 846
Write: 47 Wingrove St, Cheltenham 3192

Please make all cheques, etc, payable to "The Victorian Bing Crosby Society Social Committee".

Monday October 16th - Annual General Meeting. Mobil Centre 7.30pm

Although our first AGM was held in September last year, we have held this year's over until October to permit us to feature a major function (above) as the climax to our first year. We have chosen the Mobil Centre as the venue as it seems ideally suited to the function. If you feel that you would like to serve on the committee next year, you are welcome to submit your name on the day. Really, we should appoint an electoral officer and conduct the election on a formal basis but as we have decided the run the society on fairly easy-going lines, we will save nominations until the evening itself.
However, if you have something to say about the running of the society - suggestions, complaints or whatever, the AGM is the ideal time to do so.

Barbecue - the Ken Orren Estate - Healsville - Sunday November 12th.

More details about this one when the date approaches, but note it down now so you don't forget.

PAST FUNCTIONS

Sunday June 18th - Movie afternoon

On Sunday June 18th, we screened the first of Bing's "Road" pictures "Road to Singapore". I guess that this movie must have been screened just too many times on TV as we had a turn up of around only thirty heads. A pity, as it's still an entertaining film. The supporting shorts extracts from Busby Berkley musicals were well received though.

Monday July 3rd - Music Evening

Once again, turnout to this function was extremely low - no more than 20 brave souls turned out to the North Balwyn RSL to hear Bill Bennett, Kevin Sheather and Thelma Wood present their musical offerings. Bill played a number of little known but none-the-less interesting Crosby tracks from the 1940's & 50's while Kevin featured a tape of Bing's last radio broadcast, recorded for the BBCfour days before his death. Thelma featured another of her remarkable Crosby "quizzes" in which members had to guess who Bing's accompanlest was in each case. Kevin Sheather was the one member to get most of the names correct and won an LP from the Bentleigh Sewing and Record Centre for his pains. During the course of the evening, the raffle for the pot plant supplied by Thelma WOod was drawn - the winner being Les Saynor - most delighted with his luck.

Hopefully, the poor attendance can be put down to the out of the way location and the fact that Monday July 3rd was a typical cold Melbourne winter night. It is hoped that members will provide a better turn out for our next music evening on August 28th.

BOOK RAFFLE

Due to the poor turn out at both the above functions, the raffle for the book "The Films of Bing Crosby" has been held over until the next music evening. A hard-cover publication with over 250 pages, this book is one for every Crosby admirer. It sells in the shops here for the outrageous price of $22 but can be yours for the price of one raffle ticket - just $1.00. As consolation prices, we have three copies of the British Evening Mail colour tribute to Bing - now quite hard to come by.

NEW RECORDS

Not too many records of late but I'm happy to report that both of the excellent reissues on CBS of late 20's, early 30's Crosby material are now available in this country. A review of the first of these issues from the Melbourne Herald, appears later in the newsletter. Having obtained copies of both, I can heartily recommend them to you. Sound quality is excellent and several tracks feature alternate takes not previously available in this country - particularly appealing is an alternate version of "Young and Healthy" in which Bing throws in a

most exciting whistling chorus, something that doesn't even appear on the original Australian 78 issue. It's also nice to see that "Southern Medley" is at last "legitimate". This track has been kicking around for a few years on various pirate issues, but this is the first time that it has appeared on an official commercial issue. Another rare track, this time from 1931, is "I found You" which is being issued in Australia for the first time. Both issues are well worth having in your collection.

Reader's Digest have issued a 6 lp set of Crosby Decca material in this country. From all reports, sound quality is excellent, and although most of the tracks have appeared on LP before, if you missed out on those LP's the set is well worth having. I did write to Reader's Digest, asking if they could supply sufficient copies of their advertising sheet to include one with every newsletter, but have not heard anything from them at the time of writing. Should the material arrive in time to be included, we will include it in the envelope.

If you purchased the original issue of "Bing and Louis" back around 1960 and couldn't be bothered picking up the reissue which came out a few months back just to obtain the track "Lazy River" missing from the original release, good news. "Lazy River" has turned up on an LP entitled "18 Axis Greats" on the Axis label. The rest of the material is non-Bing, but very listenable. Mostly hits by people such as Nat King Cole, Matt Monroe, Al Martino, etc - from the early 60's.

MCA in the UK have issued a 20 track of Bing's Hawaiian tracks from the 30's and 40's including a handful not previously re-issued on LP. Cat. No. is MCFM 2839. If things follow true to course, that record will turn up here eventually, as have the first two 20 track Crosby LP's issued on MCA.

Crosby records available in Japan If you have a friend in Japan or are visiting there soon, you might try to get hold of the following.
. Bing Crosby Radio Show (4 lps) MCA 9301 . Bing in Paris MCA 7079
. Home on the range MCA 7037 .Swannee River MCA 7066
. The Greatest Hits of Bing Crosby MCA 7017 .Bing and the Dixieland Bands MCA 3030 . White Christmas (movie soundtrack) MCA 7151 .Best of Bing Crosby MCA 9232/3 . Bing Sings Gershwin MCA 3162 .Bing Crosby Golden Discs VIM 10015 . Bing Crosby Great Entertainer Series MCA9284/5/6 .How the West Was Won RCA 5739-40

BING MEMORIAL

In the last edition of the newsletter, I mentioned that Ken Twiss of Bing's hometown of Tacoma in Washington is working towards having Bing's birthplace given historical landmark status. In a recent letter, Ken writes: "At last we have been incorporated as "The Bing Crosby Historical Society". We have our employer number from IRS and are awaiting non-profit status. That should come through by the end of August. We have finally got some interest in Tacoma. Two city council members, our state rep. to Congress, Allied Arts Dept. of community development, Chamber of commerce and a few others are helping with the project. The city is buying the "Pantages Theatre" an old vaudeville house, and it will give us space for a "Crosby wing". It could be used by the drama departments of local universities. There would also be a room for a display of Crosbyana."

Ken would be delighted to hear from you with any thoughts or suggestions that you may have for a Crosby memorial. Write to him at 6814 South G Street, Tacoma, Washington, 98408, USA.

TV SPECIAL

A couple of months back, the ABC TV network in the USA screened a two-hour special on Bing entitled "Bing Crosby - his life and legend". I'm told that the programme manages to convey the unique career of Bing in the area of movies, records, radio and TV. It also covers his involvement with sports plus a coverage of his personal life. One of the highlights is a colour clip from the rare mid-30's short "Star night at the Cocoanut Grove". People who saw the programme when it was broadcast tell me that it is excellently put together. Hopefully, one of the networks here will pick the programme up, possibly for the first anniversary of Bing's death.

LETTERS

From Bernard Brusey, Burwood

I was born in 1920, which makes me 57 years of age. My first memory of Bing would be about 1929 and the first song that sticks in my mind was "Pennies from heaven". I remember that this song would be the one that really made him popular with the British public, You must remember that in those days, radio was very feeble and consisted of an accumulator and batteries. The accumulateor used to run out at a tense moment - usually in the middle of a play - and we would dash

down to the radio shop and get a replacement, leaving the old one to be recharged. If the shop happened to be closed, one would contact one's friends and desperately try and find out how the play ended and who the murderer was! There were no record programmes at the time, and the people's only knowledge of Bing was through his films. You must know that these were the depression years and people simply could not afford to buy records or gramophones when there were so many necessities to come first. When you consider the amount of records sold by Bing, it makes his popularity and success all the more memorable when you compare him with performers such as Elvis Presley or the Beatles who recorded in an age when nearly everyone had a record player.

I was taken prisoner by the Germans in 1940 until released in 1945. At one of the camps, there was an old record player, and somebody had two Bing records. These were 'Pistol Packin' Mamma' and 'I'm falling in love with someone', and these were played and played until the surface of the record looked like the surface of the moon!

After the war, I commenced work and like a lot of people, suffered from financial cramp, much of it due to my love for Bing's singing. I used to rush out of the underground after pay day, straight into the record shop to buy the latest Bing releases. I wound up with a huge box full of records. At one time, I had to pool my chips and left these records with an aquaintance. Unfortunately, some criminal stole them all and it nearly broke my heart at the time. In 1957, I came to Australia and since then, have built up a collection of Bing's LP's. It was a blow to learn of his death but we still have his records to play, and his memory will go on forever. I joined the Bing Crosby society a week before he died and I like to keep in contact with all things pertaining to Bing. To all his fans, my best wishes and good listening, and remember, just wrap your troubles in dreams.

(Have you something to say about Bing and your life? If so, drop us a line. We'll be happy to print it.)

CASSETTES NEW ADDITIONS

I'm happy to announce several new additions to the cassette library. The first concerns a cassette which we inadvertantly left out the first time round. Somehow, the thirty or so tracks between cassette 12 and 13 were omitted. These have now been recorded on a special cassette 12B which is covered on the next page.

Bing Records 12B My Reverie (14.10.38) to Stardust (22.3.39)
Bing Records 24 Blue Skies (18.7.46) to Emperor Waltz (17.3.47)
Bing Records 25 I still suits me (17.3.47) to Lullaby Land (12.7.47)
Bing Records 26 Suspense (12.7.47) to Lilli Bolero (11.12.47)
Bing Records 27 Blue shadows on the trail (11.12.47) to Ball Hal (10.3.49) (1948 - musicians strike. Only 2 sides recorded by Bing. Hence the jump in dates)

The cassette library is progressing slowly. At the moment, I would estimate that we are at about the half-way point. When we move into the LP era, things should move quicker as it is to dub entire LP's than individual tracks from 78's and other sources.

Cassettes 3 & 4 reported missing in the last newsletter have NOT been returned. However, they have been re-recorded and are back in the library.

BENTLEIGH SEWING & RECORD CENTRE

POP ROCK NOSTALGIA

350 CENTRE ROAD, BENTLEIGH, VICTORIA, 3204, AUSTRALIA

Phone: 97 1050 97 4662

ENQUIRIES WELCOME FROM INTERSTATE AND OVERSEAS MEMBERS

Whatever you're looking for in Crosby LP's, the first place to try in the above mentioned. Ken Henderson who owns the shop, has one of the best Crosby selections in Melbourne, and gives 10% off to all members of our society. If he hasn't got what you want, he'll probably be able to get it sent in for you.
However, if Ken really can't help you, try the following as a last resort.
In the UK, write to Dave Carey's Swing Shop, 1b Mitcham Lane, Streatham, London, SW 16, England.
In the US, write to Rare Records, PO Box 10518, Glendale, California, 91209, US.

(Thanks to member Eric White who provided this clipping from the Jan.78 issue of 'Films in Review)

For decades Paramount Pictures gave out '04 as Bing Crosby's correct birth date, and Bing went along with it. When he died recently, I felt that the time had come to reinstate his correct birth date of May 2, '01, which is mentioned for the last time officially in his '37 biography, *Bing*, by Ted and Larry Crosby, and also in the liner notes for my own Columbia album, *Bing Crosby in Hollywood (1930-1934)*. The correct date was used at my suggestion in the "Variety" obituary and on Edwin Newman's NBC-TV special the night of Bing's death, Friday, October 14. Jack Gordon, son of lyricist Mack Gordon, is just one of several of Bing's friends recently to confirm this birth date with me.

Since Bing's death, I have proved something I long suspected. Although Bing on countless interviews claimed he never played in a Broadway musical because no one ever asked him, he did in fact appear in two important Broadway shows, both times as part of Paul Whiteman's Orchestra, and both times at the beautiful and legendary New Amsterdam Theatre on 42nd Street.

Bing Crosby made his Broadway debut in Charles Dillingham's production *Lucky* on Tuesday, March 22, '27. The show, which dealt with pearl thieves in Ceylon, starred Mary Eaton, with Whiteman's orchestra receiving next most prominent billing. Others in the cast included Joseph Smiley, Ivy Sawyer, Richard "Skeets" Gallagher, Walter Catlett, Paul Everton, and Ruby Keeler. The score was divided between two songwriting teams: Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach, and Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. Direction was by Hassard Short, dances by David Bennett, and special choreography by Albertina Rasch.

Whiteman's band and Bing appeared in a New York City cabaret sequence late in Act. Two. Five numbers were included, with vocals in part by Bing and Al Rinker. The sequence concluded with "Rhapsody in Blue." Whiteman's contingent performed its own specialty material rather than the songs from the official score, which was rather poor. *Lucky* ran for only seventy one performances; Kern's next musical, *Show Boat*, fared rather better.

Bing's next Broadway appearance took place in the famous Ziegfeld production, *Whoopee*, starring Eddie Cantor, with Frances Upton, Ruth Etting, Tamara Geva, Chief Caupolican, Albert Hackett (later a successful screen writer), Ethel Shutta, Paul Gregory, and Spencer Charters. When this long-running hit opened on December 4, '28, George Olsen and [illegible] Band were in the cast. Almost immediately, friction developed between Olsen and Ziegfeld, and Olsen pulled his [illegible] on December 24. Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra replaced Olsen's group. As one of the three Rhythm Boys, Bing sang from the stage as he had done in *Lucky*.

Both these appearances were confirmed in lengthy telephone conversations early in November with Al Rinker, the last surviving member of the Rhythm Boys, and Jack Fulton, a long-time member of the Whiteman band. Unfortunately, neither could recall exactly what songs were performed by Bing, but I am currently working on that and will report my findings (if any) on these pages in the future.

I am certain that this is the first documentation of Bing Crosby's Broadway career, however brief it may have been. Any other information from FIR readers would be gratefully welcome.

NYC MILES KREUGER

(The following appeared recently in the Aust. trade magazine "Broadcasting & Television).

MCA Records (US) and Astor Records have renewed their long term licensing agreement after three records released under it turned gold (Australian sales of "Don't Cry For Me Argentina", "Evita" and "Musical Autobiography of Bing Crosby" reached 20,000 or more). Astor's general manager, Rex Barry, (left) presents MCA's vice president, Lou Cook, with the gold award for the five record Crosby set, after signing the deal.

. The book "The one and only Bing" by Bob Thomas mentioned in our last newsletter is now available here. Most book shops seem to have it, even some large newsagents.

. Can any members who live out Coburg way give a lift to and from meetings to another member who does not have a car? If so, drop me a line and I'll pass your offer on.

Other Crosby Soc:

The American Club Crosby, c/o Pat Sullivan, 1301, Sheridan Ave, Apt96 Chico. Cal; 95926 .

Bing Pictorial, c/o Frank Murphy, 32 Ferndale Ave, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear, NE28 7NE UK

The Intl. Crosby Circle, c/o Reg Bristo, 7 Greenmeadow Close, Cwmbran, Gwent, NP4 3NR, U.K.

The Herald, Tues., July 4, 1978

Looking back at Bing

AS America plunged into the Depression, two white singers were starting out on parallel careers.

They both had light jazz/pop voices and in band credits were listed alongside that awful phrase "vocal refrain".

One singer was Bing Crosby, who grew more successful with each decade; the other was Smith Ballew who faded into obscurity half-a-century ago.

Collectors' recordings of their careers early in the Depression are now available — "Bing Crosby Collection Volume 1" (CBS CSP 038) and "Smith Ballew and His Orchestra" (Lyric 3301).

The Crosby album is a collection of 24 songs never before released on LP. Several are rare.

"Southern Medley," for instance, was recorded for private audiences and only 10 copies were pressed almost 50 years ago.

It is a collation of Stephen Foster's "coon" songs — white man's bastardisation of minstrels.

Today it is strange to hear Crosby singing about "dear old darkies" and "ole masser".

But then this song was recorded in 1929 with Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra. And Whiteman — true to his name — was playing for white audiences only and although he played jazz, not a black face was in the band.

This album is full of history.

On the record, Whiteman's star horn player Bix Beiderbecke plays his last solo with the band before his health broke down from heavy drinking and he died two years later.

The name of this song? Ironically, "Waiting at the End of the Road".

(Melbourne identity Ron Bond recently started the undertaking shown below in which original records are interpolated with a modern dance band. Because this may be of interest to our members, I've included Ron's newspaper advertisement here.)

PLAYING EVERY WEDNESDAY
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
BING CROSBY
AL BOWLLY
FRANK SINATRA
INK SPOTS
☆GLEN MILLER ☆TOMMY DORSEY
☆LOUIS ARMSTRONG
and many more old favourites.
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
DANCE BAND MEMORIES
1925-1945 The original sounds.
A unique, new type of entertainment. Dine and dance to those original big band sounds and the magical romantic voices. A nostalgic night of memories.
PLUS — LIVE! The Rhythm Rascals featuring the golden saxophone of Neil Whirford.
NO COVER CHARGE. *7.30-11.30 p.m. each Wed. *Superb a la carte menu. *Lucky 'Spot Light' with Champagne prizes.
RESERVATIONS: 'Phone: 379 1180.
CHURCHILL
Licensed Restaurant, 980 Mt. Alexander Rd, Essendon
★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

And that wraps it up for this edition of the newsletter. Be listening to the next edition of the Crosby Collector on Sunday Sept. 10th, and especially Oct. 15th when we'll presenting a special memorial edition on the 1st anniversary of Bing's death. 3CR, 9.00 p.m. as part of Neville Wraggs popular Nostalgia Unlimited.

Bob Meech